

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 CAIRO 01180 200954 Z

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ACTION SS-25

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P R 200800 Z APR 73

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2932

INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

S E C R E T CAIRO 1180

EXDIS

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR EG LY

SUBJECT : LIBYAN MIRAGES IN EGYPT

REF: USDAO TEL AVIV 568 DTG 131455 Z APR 73

1. WHILE IDF INTELLIGENCE BRIEFINGS AND OTHER SOURCES AVAILABLE TO USG ALL INDICATE THAT SIZEABLE NUMBER OF LIBYAN MIRAGES HAVE BEEN FLOWN TO EGYPT, OUR FRENCH DIPLOMATIC COLLEAGUES ARE STILL EXPRESSING SKEPTICISM OF PRESS REPORTS CONCERNING MIRAGE TRANSFERS. ONE POSSIBLE EXPLANATION OF THESE DEVELOPMENTS WOULD BE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ADVANCE OPERATIONAL BASES FOR MIRAGES IN EGYPT. BULK OF MIRAGES COULD STILL BE KEPT IN LIBYA WITH SMALLER NUMBERS TEMPORARILY ASSIGNED TO EGYPTIAN BASES ON ROTATIONAL BASIS FOR TESTING GROUND ENVIRONMENT AND FOR TRAINING IN EGYPTIAN OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES. MARCH AIRLIFT BETWEEN LIBYA AND EGYPT COULD THEN BE EXPLAINED, AT LEAST PARTIALLY, AS TRANSFER OF MIRAGES GROUND ENVIRONMENT AND OTHER MIRAGE LOGISTIC REQUIREMENTS. WITH MOST LIBYAN MIRAGES STILL IN LIBYA, GOL WOULD HOPE TO BE IN A POSITION TO CONCEAL OPERATION OR AT LEAST TO DENY PLAUSIBLY THAT THEY HAD TRANSFERRED MIRAGES TO EGYPT. THEY MIGHT ALSO HOPE THAT THIS STRATEGEM WOULD AVOID MAJOR CONFRONTATION WITH GOF WHICH COULD LEAD TO CANCELLATION OF FUTURE MIRAGE DELIVERIES ON GROUNDS THAT PLANES WERE TRANSFERRED OUT OF LIBYA

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WITHOUT GOF PERMISSION.

2. IN CASE OF OUTBREAK OF HOSTILITIES, BULK OF MIRAGES COULD BE QUICKLY MOVED TO EGYPT IF TACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS SO WARRANT. OVERFLIGHT OF MIRAGES BASED IN EGYPT OVER EGYPTIAN CITIES COULD ALSO BE USED BY SADAT AS PROPAGANDA PLOY AT SOME FUTURE DATE AS PART OF A STRATEGY OF MOBILIZING EGYPTIAN PUBLIC AND HEATING UP SITUATION IN AREA.

3. ASSUMING ALL THIS IS TRUE, WE HAVE NO WAY OF JUDGING WHETHER GOF AGREEMENT WAS OBTAINED IN ADVANCE OR IF IT WAS OBTAINED AT ALL. IT SEEMS UNLIKELY, HOWEVER, THAT GOF COULD REMAIN UNAWARE OF SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT FOR LONG, ALTHOUGH GOF MIGHT STILL ATTEMPT TO DENY TO GOVT OF ISRAEL AND USG THAT TRANSFERS HAD ACTUALLY TAKEN PLACE.

4. WE ARE NOT QUALIFIED TO DISCUSS TECHNICAL ASPECTS OF SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT.

WILEY

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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** EXDIS

*** Current Classification *** SECRET

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